(b) if so, the reasons therefore ;

(c) the number of applications received by the General Manager, Delhi Telephones from the Members of Parliament between January 1993 to January 1994 ; and

(d) the details of cases disposed of in the office of each of the General Manager after two weeks, four weeks and more than four weeks, separately ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) ; (a) to (d) Sir, the required information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

**Opening of Post Offices**

893. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is under pressure to open more post offices as well as constrained to observe austerity due to deficit ;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government propose to increase the price of posts card to meet the twin demand ;

(c) whether it is also a fact that common man is likely to be adversely affected by this proposal ;

(d) whether any alternate is being considered to safeguard the interest of common man ; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : (a) Yes, Sir. Post offices are opened progressively under Plan depending upon the fulfilment of the departmental norms and availability of resources.

(b) Revision of postal tariff is generally, a part of the exercise for the finalisation of the General Budget. As regards the possibility of increase in the price of post card, it may not be possible to indicate any details in this regard since no final views have yet been taken by the Government on this subject.

(c) to (e) Do not arise in view of (b) above.

**Postal Communication System**

894. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have taken steps to create a reliable and efficient postal communication system ;

(b) if so, the details thereof ; and

(c) the projection made for Eighth and Ninth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : (a) Yes, Sir. Efforts are being made through the sucessive plans to create a reliable and efficient Postal Communication System .

(b) and (c) Details are annexed as a statement.

**Statement**

The Plan schemes of the Department of Posts for creating

reliable and efficient postal communication system include (a) expansion of postal network to all eligible villages which fulfil departmental norms regarding income, distances and population.

(b) provisions of letter boxes in all villages with population over 500.

(c) upgradation of technology in Post Mail offices.

(d) mechanisation and segmentation of mail processing.

There are at present 1,52, 776 Post Offices in the country. During the 8th Five Year Plan the target is to open 1440 Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices and 650 Departmental Sub Post Offices. Of these, 1302 Extra Departmental Branch Offices and 231 Departmental Sub Post Offices have been sanctioned during the first 2 years of the 8th Plan period to further improve and extend the Postal Services. The remaining Post Offices will be sanctioned at the rate of 80 Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices and 150 Departmental sub Post Offices in each year.

The Department has also ecently formulated a scheme alled the Panchayat Dak Seva ojana whereby basic postal and banking facilities will be extended on a contractual basis to village through the village Panchayat. This scheme will supplement the Department's efforts to expend the postal network to areas which require Post Office facilities.

The Department's objective of providing letter boxes in all villages with population over 500 is also targetted to be fulfilled during the 8th Five Year Plan.

A programme for upgrading counter services to provide more efficient and responsive customer services through introduction of computer-based counter machine is under implementation and 1069 such machines have so far been installed in postal counters in the country.

A programme for more efficient and speedier mail processing has also been initiated with the setting up of the country's first Automated Mail Processing Centre in April, 1993 at Bombay Airport Sorting Offices. The second Automated Mail Processing Centre is in the process of being set up in Madras and a third one is targetted to be set up during the Eighth Plan period in Delhi.

A pilot scheme for more efficient and speedier transmission of Money Order through Satellite Channel has been implemented and by the end of the Eighth Plan. 75 Centres are targetted to be covered under this scheme. Systematized arrangement for efficient and speedier transmission and delivery of Pin-coded letters between Delhi and other State Capitals and the metros has been introduced. New Schemes like Business Channel and the Express Parcel Scheme have been introduced to improve the speed of transmission of various segments of mail traffic.

The objective of the Eighth Plan of the Department is to develop a truly modern communication system based on technology and provide new value added services which meet the needs and expectation of the customers. The Ninth Five Year Plan of the country, including that of this Department, is yet to be finalised. However, improvement of the Communication network will continue to be the prime objectiv of the Department's future plans.